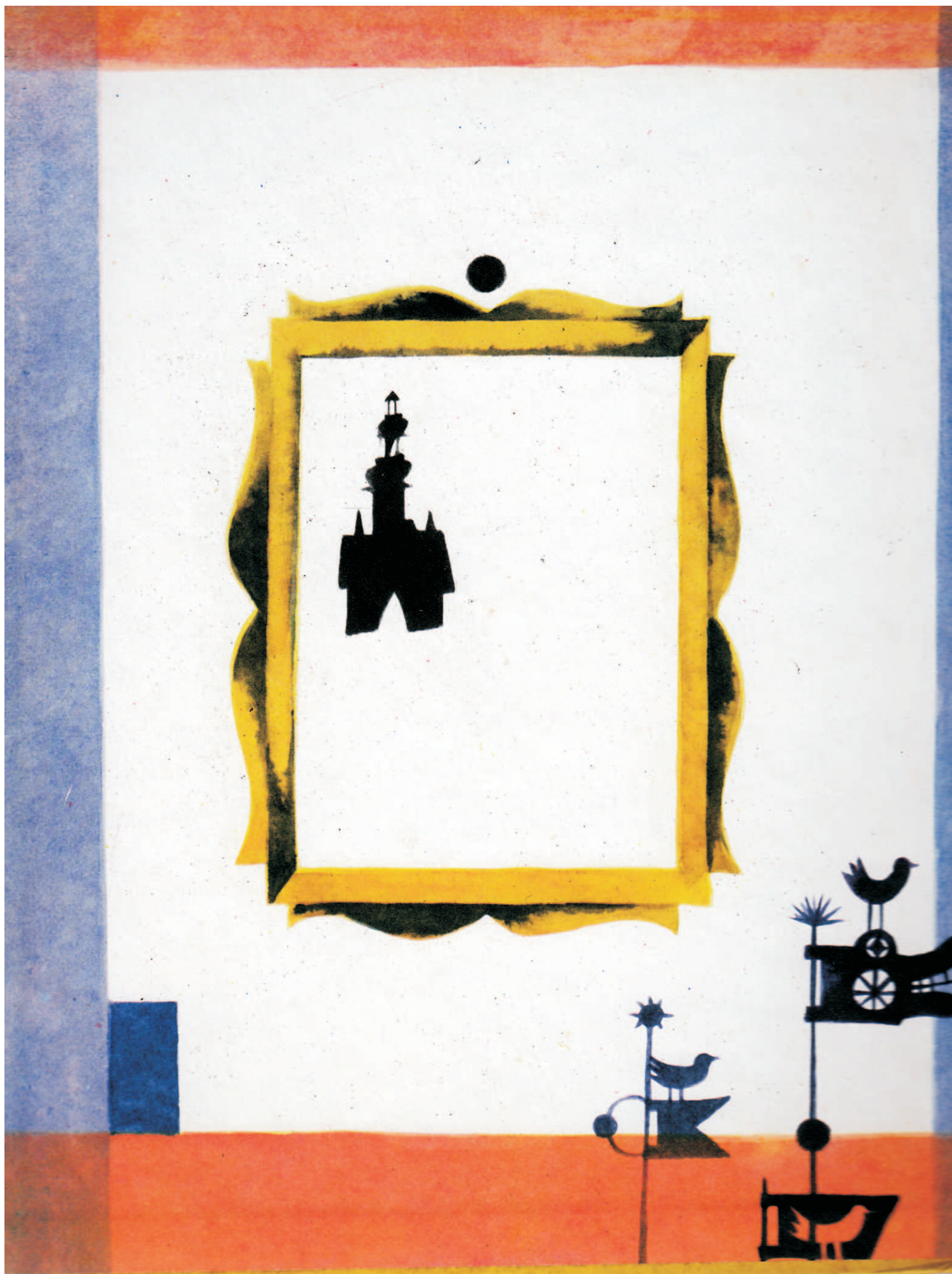




L. Yakhnin

CARDBOARD CLOCK SQUARE



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ПЛОЩАДЬ КАРТОННЫХ ЧАСОВ

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BRIM THE HATTER

A man wearing high boots and a large green hat was walking along a forest path one bright day.

Crunch, crunch, went the pebbles underfoot.

Swish, swish, went the springy twigs as they brushed against his hat.

The man was singing a lively song. He was Brim the Hatter and was returning home from the fair. Colored cardboard hatboxes knocked against each other on his back. The boxes were empty. This was what made Brim happy, for he had sold all of his hats.

There was a blueness in the air. The blue branches on the trees cast blue shadows. The sun pushed off from the pointed tip of the highest pine and now shone high overhead.

"Oho," Brim said to himself, "it's already noon. The bees have all hidden in the grass. It's about time I sat down and had a bite to eat."

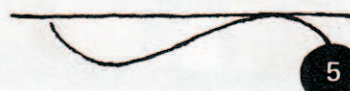
He found a little clearing in which there was a small stump.

"Just the place," he said and spread his lunch on it.

After Brim had eaten he lit his pipe and blew a smoke circle.

"Wouldn't it be nice to make a huge green hat from this clearing and then tie the path into a triple bow for trimming."

Brim had not used a scissors or a needle since morning, and that was a



long time of not working for a good hatter. He smiled, pulled out his big shears and cut a house out of the red cardboard hatbox. It was a little house with a narrow door and square windows. Then he made a long-beaked cardboard stock to crown the steep roof. After that Brim cut out another house and a third, and a fourth, using the yellow box, the lilac box, the blue box and the orange box.

Finally, he cut a round clock out of the bottom of the largest box. "This will be the town clock," he said, "and I'll call the square Card-board Clock Square."

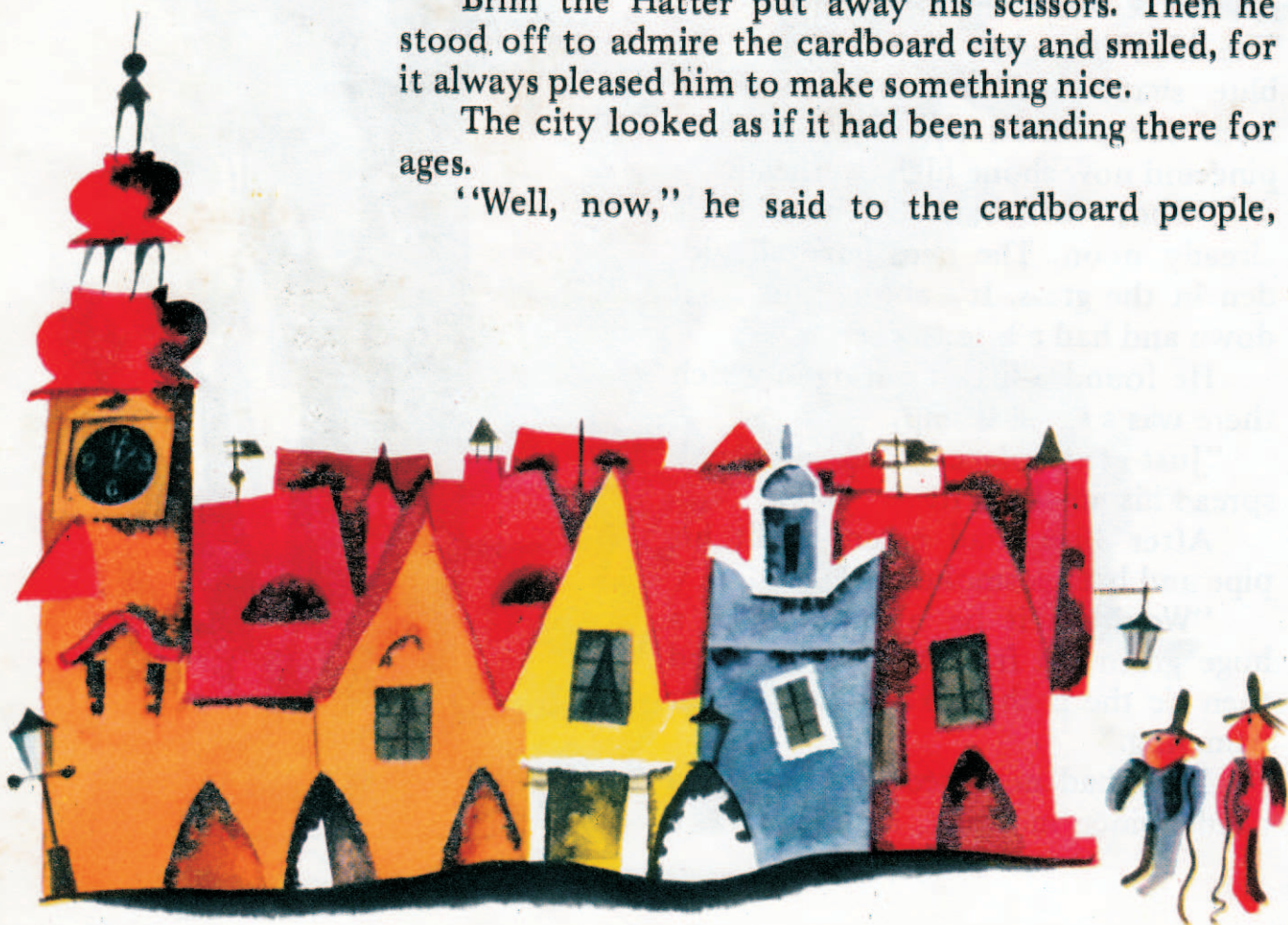
Brim had used up all the boxes. "Oh! How will I make the people? There are no boxes left. I can't make them from these scraps. If I do, they'll be so small they won't even be able to climb the steps of their own houses. And since I don't have any paste, I'll have to sew them."

He threaded his needle and cut out bodies from the bits of leftover cardboard. He sewed a head on top, two arms at the sides and two legs on the bottom of each. Then he made a cardboard hat for each little cardboard person.

Brim the Hatter put away his scissors. Then he stood off to admire the cardboard city and smiled, for it always pleased him to make something nice.

The city looked as if it had been standing there for ages.

"Well, now," he said to the cardboard people,





"you have everything you need: good friends and work to do. I hope you will all be happy! "

Brim suddenly noticed that string-like threads were still attached to the arms and legs of all the cardboard people. Actually, he should have stopped to cut them off, but he had just put his shears away. It was the first time in his life that Brim the Hatter had been too lazy to do a job.

"It really doesn't matter," he said to himself. "The strings hang down their backs and won't be in their way. Actually, if you pull them you can make the cardboard people move."

At this, he waved goodbye to Cardboard City and its inhabitants and set off on his way.

THE ROBBER BY THE HIGHWAY

Legging the Robber was sitting by an old oak tree, eating blueberries. He was quite a mess, for his lips and cheeks were stained blue from the juice, his hands looked as if they were spotted with ink and his red beard had turned all colors.

Legging the Robber ate the last berry, licked his fingers and sighed.

"O-ho-ho! Here I am, sitting by the highway. I haven't robbed anyone all day. My granddaddy, the famous robber Swash Buckle, had an easy time of it. In those days people believed in highway robbers and were scared silly of them. But nowadays everybody makes fun of us. How can you rob a person if he's not afraid of you?"

Legging sighed miserably again.

Just then he heard someone singing a song. The singing was coming from beyond the trees. He stopped to listen. This is what he heard:

*Lippy-dippy-darrow,
Once there was a sparrow,
Light and fluffy, grey and neat.
Twitter, tweet! Twitter, tweet!*

Legging beamed. "I'll scare him and rob him!" he said and pulled a black eye-patch from his pocket.





He tied the patch over his right eye and became a Terrible One-Eyed Robber. Then he pulled his pistol from his belt. It didn't work, but it was big and rusty.

Legging barely had time to hide behind a tree when Brim the Hatter appeared.

"I swear by my granddaddy, the famous robber Swash Buckle, that I'll have something better than sour berries for dinner today," Legging said to himself.

*"Sparrow, will thee kindly
Tell me where to find thee?
Twitter, tweet! Twitter, tweet! "*

Brim sang.

"Oho! " Legging the Robber shouted in his most awful voice. "Who dared to wake me up? " He dashed out from behind the tree, brandishing his heavy pistol.

"Listen, my friend, people aren't supposed to sleep in the daytime."

Legging didn't know what to say. This man annoyed him terribly.

"I'll shoot you, and I'll rob you! " he shouted at the top of his voice.

"I'm sure you'll miss, One-Eyed Robber, because your gun is in your right hand and you're taking aim with your left eye."

"I can aim with my right eye, too," Legging said and pushed the black eye-patch from his right eye the his left.

"Oh, so you're not one-eyed at all," Brim said and laughed. "Here's a slice of cheese if you're hungry, my friend. I have to be going. I've no time to stand around talking."

And Brim was off again, singing his song.

Legging the Robber was about to chase him, but decided to bite off a piece of cheese instead. He began chomping loudly.

THE GIRL ON THE CANDY WRAPPER

A breeze blew through the grass and rustled a candy wrapper in a ditch by the road.

The wrapper rolled over and over. A little girl climbed out of it and began smoothing her dress. Then she turned back and called: "Choc'lit! Choc'lit! Here, boy! "

The candy wrapper moved again and a small brown dog scampered out. It ran over to her and wagged its tail.

The girl looked sadly at the remains of the bright wrapper and said, "See, Choc'lit, the candy wrapper we were drawn on is all torn. Now we have no place to go and no place to live."

"Bow-wow! " Choc'lit replied, wagging his tail still faster.

"You're a very smart dog, Choc'lit, but there's so much you don't understand," the Candy Wrapper Girl said. Since she had no home any longer and so had no place to hurry back to, she sat down on a rock by the road to think of what they were to do.

Just then a man in a big green hat appeared on the highway.

"What is a little girl doing all alone in the woods? "

"Nothing. I really don't know



what to do." Then she told the man in the green hat about not having a home any more.

He listened to her story and said, "I'm awfully sorry, but I don't have a candy wrapper for you. Even if I did, I'm sure it would already have a picture drawn on it. But I'll try to help you." He took a large goose feather from his hat and wrote two words on a dry maple leaf.

"Now follow the road back to where I came from and make sure you don't lose the leaf. When you get to a grassy clearing with a tree



stump in the middle you'll find a cardboard city there. Go to see the Baker. I think he'll be able to find something for a Candy Wrapper Girl."

"Should I give him the maple leaf? "

"No. Save it. If you ever need me, go to the fair in Big City and show it to anyone you meet. I'm Brim the Hatter. Everyone knows me."

Having told her what to do, Brim set off on his way again.



A BIT MORE ABOUT LEGGING

Legging the Robber polished off the cheese, brushed the crumbs from his beard and yawned. He was not angry any more.

"I think I'll take a nap," he said and settled down on the soft moss by the roadside. Soon a terrible snoring and whistling was heard, and then all was still.

The fearful robber was sound asleep. He was dreaming of his granddaddy, the famous robber Swash Buckle.



A CITY OF CLOSED DOORS

Since Legging the Robber was sound asleep, he did not see the girl and the little brown dog pass him as they walked down the road.

The dog ran on ahead. It darted into the bushes and began to bark.

"Choc'lit! Where are you? "

"Bow-wow! "

Still, Legging the Robber heard nothing.

The girl followed the dog into the bushes. She moved the branches aside and came out on a grassy clearing.

There was the city. Since the clearing was not very big, the houses were set close together. The street looked as if it were made of a row of colored strips with tiny windows and pointed red roofs. The sun had not yet gone down beyond the trees, and sunspots were playing on the houses.

Choc'lit barked and began chasing sparrows, but the little girl went over to the first house in the row and knocked.

Knock, knock, the door echoed. There was no answer.

The Candy Wrapper Girl went to the next house and knocked.

Tap, tap! the second door echoed.



No one came to the door here, either.

Then the Candy Wrapper Girl crossed the street and knocked on the door of a house that said "Shoemaker" on the sign outside.

Pi-inng! the window whined. But she could not hear anyone's steps.

"That's strange. Do people go to bed that early here? Then we'll have to wait till they wake up. Come on, Choc'lit, let's go for a walk in the woods."



LEGGING THE ROBBER DISCOVERS CARDBOARD CITY

If an ant hadn't crawled into Legging's nose, he probably would have slept like a log for three days. But an ant did crawl up his left nostril. He wriggled his nose and woke up. Just as he was about to go back to sleep again, he thought he smelled chocolate.

"I bet I could eat a ton of chocolate," he said to himself. "That's because I have a sweet tooth, though my granddady always said that wherever there was chocolate, there were bound to be children, and children are a robber's worst enemies, because they can melt his heart."

Legging shut his eyes. He breathed in deeply. Indeed, there was a strong smell of chocolate right near his foot. He opened his eyes and peeked at his boot.

A little girl was sitting on it. She was lost in thought and so neither heard nor saw him.

Legging moved his foot. "Who said you could sit on my heel?"

The little girl jumped up and saw the big red beard that looked like a huge broom.





"Oh! I'm awfully sorry! I thought it was a tree stump."

"You don't say? So my heel is a tree stump, is it? Soon they'll be saying I'm just an old log myself," he muttered. "Who are you?"

"I'm the Candy Wrapper Girl, and this is my dog Choc'lit".

"Is he really made of chocholate? "

"Yes."

"I love chocholate. I think I'll eat your delicious dog."

"Oh, no! How can you eat a real live dog? Please don't. I'll give you as much candy as you want, because I'm the Candy Wrapper Girl and my pockets are always full of candy."

She gave Legging a handful of chocolate candies wrapped in silver foil.

Legging swallowed them in the wrappers and cheered up. "What are you doing here, Candy Wrapper Girl? "

"I'm looking for the Baker of Cardboard City. I knocked on all the doors, but nobody answered. They're probably all asleep. I'll wait here a while and then go back to look for the Baker."

"Do you think everybody there is asleep in the daytime? " Leggings asked slyly.

"Yes. Otherwise someone would have certainly come to the door."

"Ah, that's fine. Just fine." Legging mumbled and said to himself: "It's easier to rob a person who's sleeping. That's what my granddaddy said, and he knew what he was talking about."

Then Legging smiled a sugary smile and said: "Let's go to that wonderful city together, my dear, and see all the wonderful people who sleep so wonderfully well."

THE CARDBOARD PEOPLE

When the little girl and the huge bearded robber entered the city it was still deserted.

Clomp, clomp, went Legging's boots on the street.

"Who should we rob first?" he said softly.

"What?"

"I was just wondering which house to try first, my dear Candy Wrapper Girl," he said as he tiptoed over to the Shoemaker's house.

"Ho-ho," he said to himself. "What I really need is a pair of new red boots with tassles."

The door was not locked.

The Shoemaker was sitting at his workbench. He had a hammer in one hand and a shoe in the other.

"Good day," the little girl said politely.

But the Shoemaker did not reply.

Legging felt around under the table and pulled out a pair of brand new boots. They were so small they fit into his hand. He was not at all pleased. "Hey, Shoemaker, where are the bigger sizes?"

But once again the Shoemaker did not reply.

Then Legging noticed the strings that were attached to the Shoemaker's arms and legs. He yanked at them angrily.





Suddenly, the Shoemaker turned his head, smiled and said: "Hello, little girl. Come in. I know you need a pair of pretty slippers, otherwise you wouldn't have come to the old Shoemaker."

He had not noticed Legging, because the robber was much bigger than the house. All that could be seen of him through the window was a part of his leg and that looked like an old tree.

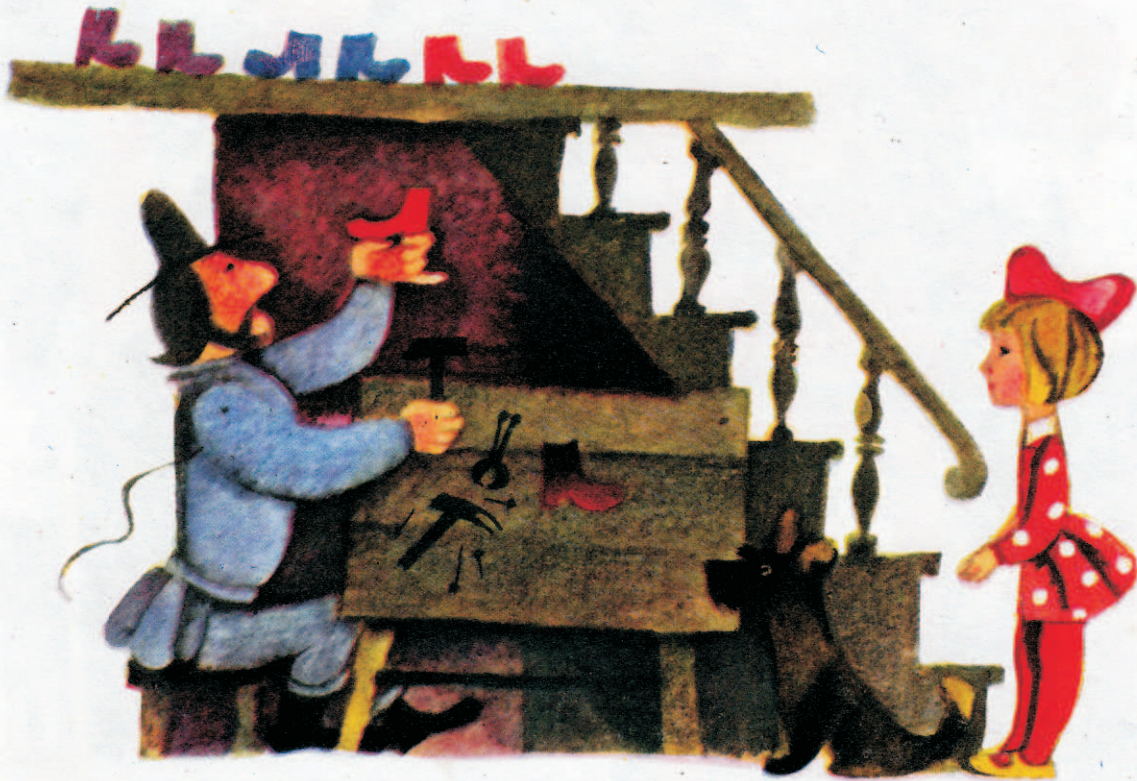
Everyone had forgotten about Choc'lit. He squeezed through the door now and came pitter-patter across the room.

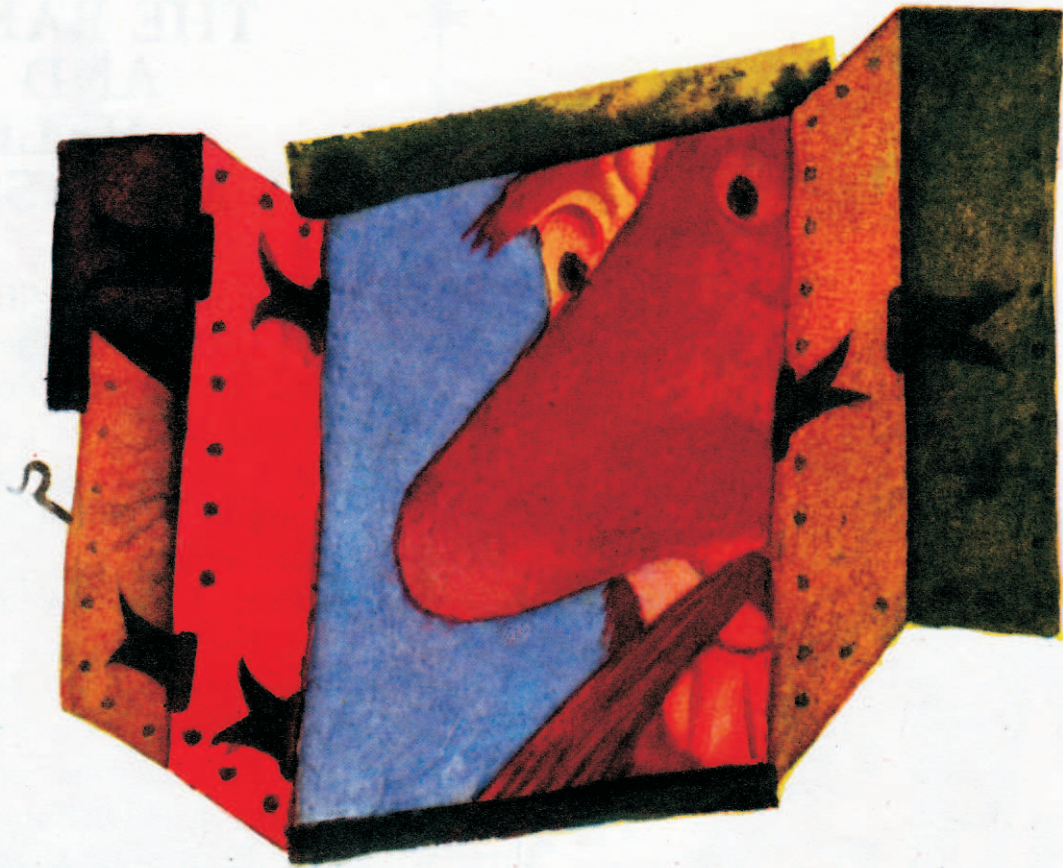
"Go back outside this minute, Choc'lit!" the little girl said. "Nobody asked you in."

But Choc'lit pretended he hadn't heard and ran up the stairs. She had to run right up after him.

Meanwhile, the sly robber hurried over to the next house. This time he opened the door and jerked the strings that were attached to the arms and legs of the people inside.

They were Scissors the Barber and his wife, they walked right over to a table, sat down and began eating brown beans from a deep dish.





Their spoons made so much noise they didn't hear Legging laugh and say:

"My granddaddy, the famous robber Swash Buckle, never dreamed of such luck. If I pull the strings I can make all these people do as I wish." At this he set out across the city, pulling all the strings attached to all the cardboard people.

The city was soon filled with noise and commotion.

THE BAKER AND HIS HELPER MOLASSES

"Please don't mind Choc'lit," the Candy Wrapper Girl said to the Shoemaker. "He's a very smart dog, but there's so much he doesn't understand. I haven't come here for new slippers. I'm looking for the Baker. Do you know where he lives? "

"Of course, I do. We're old friends. I'm a bachelor and like to spend my evenings in the bakery. There's such a wonderful smell of cinnamon there. Follow this crooked street until you reach a blue house with three windows. Then cross Cardboard Clock Square and stop at the third house from the bridge. That's the bakery. And please tell the Baker I won't be over this evening, because I have a lot of work to do. Goodbye, little girl," the Shoemaker said and picked up his hammer. He tossed some tiny pegs into his mouth and began working.

"Thank you," the Candy Wrapper Girl said and went off to find the Baker's house.

She soon saw a sign. The big letters on it read:

BAKERY





Underneath, in smaller letters, were the words:

Cakes
and
Tasty Pastry

A little old man with a long white beard opened the door. His glasses had slid down to the tip of his round nose.

"How do you do," the Candy Wrapper Girl said.

The little old man adjusted his glasses. His eyebrows twitched.

"You are the Baker, aren't you?" she said in a louder voice.

He wiped a dribble of frosting from his beard, licked his finger thoughtfully and said, "I can't seem to remember why I came to the door."

"You probably answered my knock."

"You don't say? Perhaps you're right. Come inside quickly and tell me what you want."

He led her down a narrow hall to a room with a table in the center. A huge slab of yellow nougat covered the table like a cloth.

A fat boy was running around and around it, cutting the nougat into little squares. He popped every other piece into his mouth and packed the remaining ones in a box.

"Can you tell me why I just came in, Molasses?" the Baker asked the fat boy. "I can't seem to remember."

The boy pushed a square of nougat back in his cheek and muttered: "You brought the girl in."

"Ah, yes. I forgot all about her. Now tell me who you are and why you're here," he said.

"I'm a Candy Wrapper Girl and my name is Waffles. My wrapper tore, and my dog Choc'lit and I have no place to live any more. I want to help you bake cakes and make filled candies."

"Well, a man can always use a good helper, no matter what his trade," the Baker said and peered at her over the rims of his glasses.



But Molasses didn't want anyone to come and live in this house of sweets. "We don't need any helpers. We already have enough helpers. I'm our helper," he said in a huffy voice.



SCISSORS THE BARBER

Scissors the Barber was scooping up the last of the brown beans from the deep dish. No sooner had he got the slippery beans into the spoon and carried it to his mouth than a loud voice called:

"Hey, there! Barber! "

"I'm coming! " Scissors wanted to call out, but since his mouth was full of beans, what he said was: "Ab cobbim! "

Legging the Robber put his head close to the window and said, "Don't you tease me. I can get very angry, you know."

Scissors looked over his shoulder and saw Legging's red beard. He wanted to say, "I'm not teasing you", but one last bean slipped under his tongue and what he actually said was: "Ub nud dezing gu."

"Don't you know how to talk? "

Scissors the Barber finally swallowed the last bean.

"Of course I don't. I mean, I do, of course. If you know what I mean." Poor Scissors was so confused he forgot he did not have on his hat and so pulled off his wig.

"Ho-ho," Legging said. "Well, then, get out your comb and trim my beard. But be careful! "







Scissors brought out his sharp shears that clicked like an aligator's teeth and began trimming the bushy red beard. This was no easy job, because Legging was a very hairy robber. He even had hair growing out of his nostrils and ears.

Clip, clip! Snip, snip! went the shears.

"Hey, Barber! See you don't cut off my ear! "

"Sorry. I didn't notice it. I'm quite sure there wasn't an ear on this side."

"What do you mean? Why, do you know who I am?" Legging roared.

"Ah, here it is! Indeed. And who are you? "

"Who am I? My granddaddy Swash Buckle used to say: 'The less people know about you, the better.' And my granddaddy was a famous rob...."

Legging was about to say "robber", but caught himself in time. He clapped his hand to his mouth.

"Who did you say your granddaddy was? "

"Famous," Legging muttered. "He was a famous granddaddy. Isn't that enough? Anyway, you ask too many questions."

"Indeed!" Scissors the Barber said to himself. "If his granddaddy

was famous, he's probably even more famous. I'll save the hair clippings for wigs. I know I'll be able to sell them at a very good price. I'd better trim off some more."

"I never did like barbers," Legging was thinking. "You wait and wait until your beard grows out and then they snip it off in a flash." At this he crossed his eyes to get a better view of his beloved beard. "It's much too short," he grumbled.

"Not at all. In fact, it's even longer than it was," Scissors replied. He was a bit frightened. "Here you are, all done."

"I never did like barbers," Legging was saying to himself as he walked away. "You can't even rob them, because they never have anything of value anyway."

"I'll make a hundred wigs," Scissors the Barber was saying to himself as he stuffed the beard clippings into a big sack.



MOLASSES AND WAFFLES

"Why'd you come here?" Molasses asked Waffles the minute the Baker left the room.

"I've already told you."

"I know why. You're going to spy on me and eat all the trimmed crusts from the cakes," Molasses said as he stuffed two candied fruit peels into his mouth. He was silent for a moment and then added: "All right. Maybe we'll take you on as the junior assistant of the senior assistant. That's me. You'll have to do just as I say. Take that knife and start cutting the nougat. I'll sit down and rest a while."

That's exactly what he did. He got onto the couch and yawned.

"And don't forget, you're supposed to work very slowly. If you start working fast we'll fire you."

"Why?"

"Because I won't have time for a nice rest."

"But you're supposed to be an assistant who helps with the WORK!"

"That's right. But people who work have to rest. The Baker has no time to rest. That's why I have to rest and sleep, and go out for walks for him."



THE KING OF CARDBOARD CITY

Legging was very pleased. He was walking along, talking to himself.

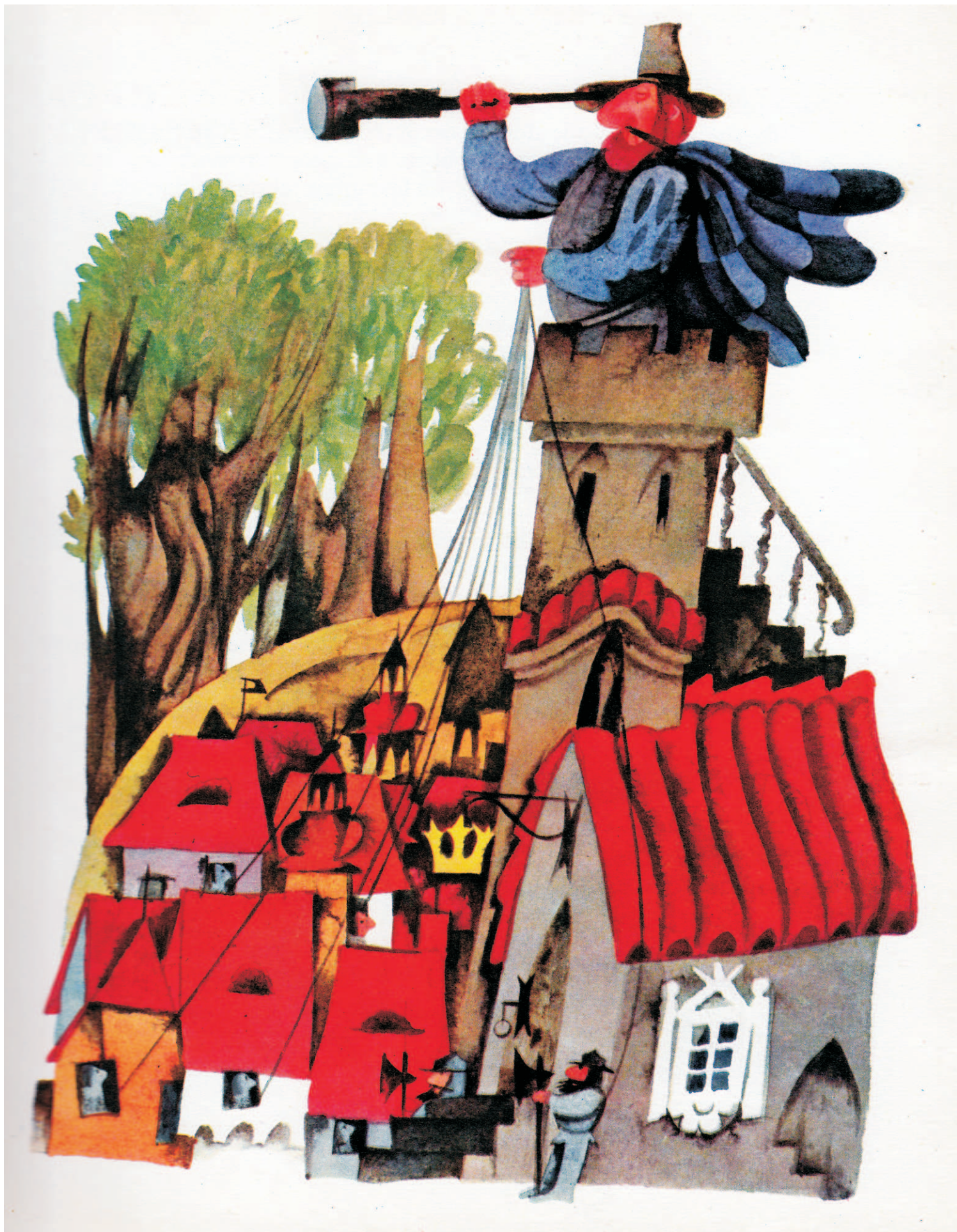
"Now I'll have everything I want: lots of food, new boots and a big house. I'll make everyone in the city help to build my house. It'll have three steps leading up to the front door, and inside there's going to be a shelf for my pistol, a drawer for my big sharp knife and a huge bed for me. There'll also be a tower, even higher than the fire tower, so I can climb up and see who's coming along the highway and then rob them.

"All the strings attached to all the people will lead to my house. I'll pull a string and the cook will come running, and I'll say: 'Stupid old cook, where's your cook book? Make me something good, and be quick about it!' And I'll sleep like a top, with my own guards at the gate. They'll even have a special guard song.

*"We are very able guards,
Don't you try to pass.
If you want to cross this yard,
You must have a pass.
We have sharpened every axe,
We stand guard at night.
Stamping feet cannot relax,
We are always right.*

"Ah, things'll be wonderful then, ho-ho! Even my famous granddaddy





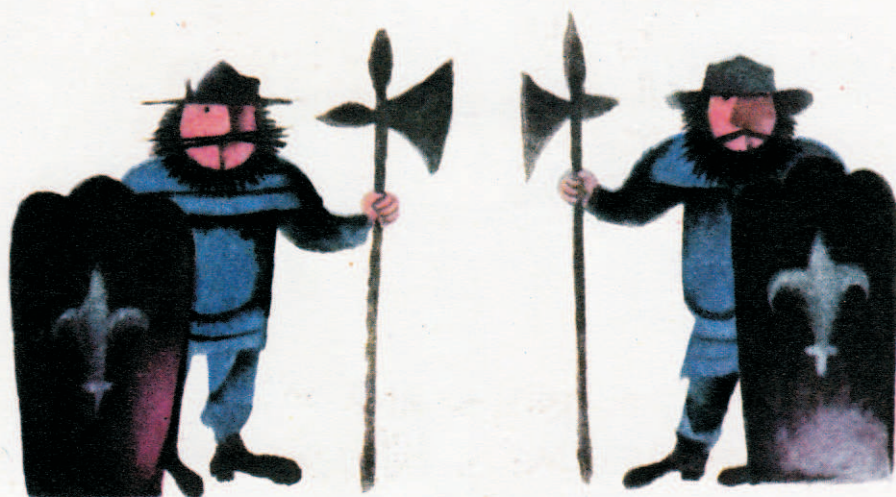
didn't have it this good.

"By the way, why shouldn't I become the king of Cardboard City? A King isn't any worse than a robber, and people respect him more. They'll all have to respect me then. I'll be pulling all the strings, after all, and I can yank anyone who disobeys me back into place quickly enough." At this Legging began to sing:

*"I'm the king! I'm the king!
No one's better than me!
So come quick when I ring,
Much before I count three!
I'm the king! I'm the king!
I am truly! Indeed!
I'll have everyone bring
Caviar, chocolate and mead."*

"I think I'll go over to the bakery and get some chocolate. In fact, I think I like chocolate even more than caviar sandwiches."

And so Legging went off to find the bakery.



CHOC'LIT IS IN DANGER

When Legging got there he looked in the window.

"At last, I'll have a whole crate of chocolate to myself," he said in his stickiest voice.

Molasses tried to hide behind a sofa pillow but couldn't, because his fat round cheeks stuck out on either side.

Legging saw him. "Come on out, fatty. Are you the Baker?"

"N-no. I'll call him." Molasses scurried out of the room.

The Baker soon appeared. He stood in the doorway with a puzzled look. Molasses peeped out from behind him in fright.

"What was it I wanted here?" the Baker said. "Whenever I'm called away from my work I get confused."

"Don't worry, I'll tell you what it's all about," Legging said to himself, while aloud he boomed: "Hello, Baker!"

The Baker spun around, raised his eyebrows and peered at Legging over the rims of his glasses just as Legging was saying: "Bring me your entire stock of chocolate. And be



quick about it. I'm in a hurry."

"All I have is milk chocolate."

"That's fine! Milk chocolate is the best kind anyway. Let's have all of it," Legging grinned excitedly.

"But don't you understand? Milk chocolate is for children."

Just then Waffles came in with Choc'lit at her heels. He was wagging his tail.

"How do you do," Waffles said. "I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name."

"I'm Legging the Rob.... I mean, Rob ... rob ... robust. That's me. Legging."

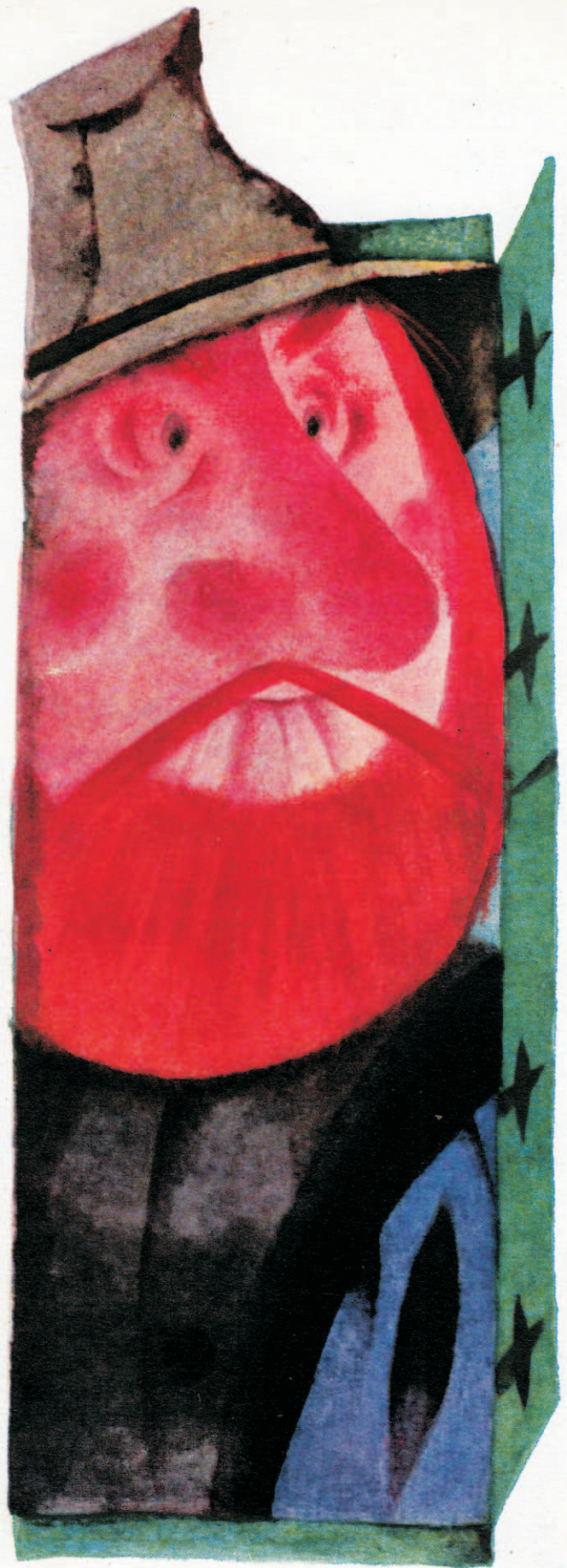
While Waffles and Legging were talking, the Baker moved away from the window and began waving his hands. He had just invented a pink cream filling for chocolate eclairs.

"Listen, you old Pie Pan!" Legging shouted. "How long am I supposed to wait?"

The Baker raised his eyebrows in surprise. He looked as if he had never seen Legging before.

Waffles became angry. She stamped her foot. "How dare your shout at him like that?" she said.

Little Choc'lit decided it was about time he had his say,



too. He barked and rushed at Legging.

Legging grabbed Choc'lit by the ear and dropped him into his deep pocket.

"He-he-he. This chocolate pup'll be enough for today, but tomorrow I'm expecting a crate of chocolate. Is that clear?" At this Legging turned and walked off.

They could hear Choc'lit howling pitifully in the distance. "O-ww ww!"



FLUTE THE CLOWN IN CARDBOARD CITY

People were hurrying along the highway through the woods to the fair. Strong silent peasants were bringing in cartloads of pumpkins. Milkmaids were carrying milk in shiny tin pails. Tinsmiths carried their shears and hammers. Candy vendors carried baskets of colored sweets, and parents carried their small children on their shoulders.

A roving actor had joined the noisy crowd. He carried a folding screen under his arm and some rag dolls in a box slung over his shoulder.

Flute the Clown was sticking half-way out of the box. He was singing softly:

*"I nod my head to everyone,
So all can see my tassle.
I'm red and blue, and full of fun,
And really am a rascal."*

Then he noticed an elderberry bush. "This branch will make a good flute," he said to himself and grabbed hold of it.

Just then the box on the





roving actor's back floated away from under him. The branch bounced back, whisking Flute the Clown through the air like a bullet, through the branches of an oak tree, sending down a shower of heavy acorns. He landed right in the middle of a street in Cardboard City.

CHOC'LIT IS SAVED

Waffles rushed outside. "Stop! " she shouted. "Let Choc'lit go! "

Legging ran down a side street, but since his head was higher than the rooftops, Waffles could still see where he was.

"Stop! " she shouted again and ran after him.

He didn't even turn to look back. His beard swept the roofs like a broom, raising clouds of dust everywhere.

"Ah-choo! " Waffles heard him sneeze. He was very far ahead of her.

She stopped and burst into tears. "I'll never catch up with him," she sobbed. Then she heard someone say:

"Oh, me! Oh, my! I certainly did fly! But after that flight, I don't feel quite right."

Waffles turned to see who it was. A rag-doll clown in a cap with a bell on the tip was sitting on the ground, rubbing his side.

"You're not hopping or skipping. Instead you are weeping. Flute the Clown at your service. Please let me help you, Miss."



Waffles sobbed and said, "He took my dog Choc'lit off in his pocket. He's going to eat him, but Choc'lit is a live dog."

"Wait a bit, wait a bit. What about live choc'lit? I don't know what you mean. That's something I've never seen." Flute the Clown said and got up quickly.

Just then Legging's head appeared over the rooftops for a moment.

"There he is! " Waffles cried. "He kidnapped my dog Choc'lit! "

Flute looked in the direction she was pointing and saw Legging.

"All right, child, don't you cry, we'll snatch your dog back by-and-by. He won't get away. We'll go round the other way! "

And so they both dashed down the narrow street to block Legging's getaway.

That was why Legging, who was whistling happily, turned a corner and came face to face with Waffles and Flute the Clown.

"Hey, you brute! Give us back our pup! Otherwise I will beat you up. Just because I may look very small, is no reason to snicker at all. I will tear out your beard hair by hair, and I'll drag you off to a wolf's lair! " Flute shouted.

"He-ha-haw. A couple of patches with a bell on top thinks he can threaten me. Why, I'll...."

Just as Legging was about to grab Flute, Choc'lit bit his thigh through the pocket lining.

Legging shuddered, stumbled and fell. At this, Choc'lit popped out of his pocket and dashed over to Waffles, barking wildly all the while.

"Let's run! " Flute shouted.

In no time Waffles, Choc'lit and Flute had disappeared around a corner.

"Help! Stop them! " Legging howled.



CARDBOARD CLOCK SQUARE

Evening was soon upon them. Cardboard Clock Square was filling up with people, for it was customary for everyone who was not really busy to come here in the evening.

There was the Tailor with a black satin pin-cushion tied to his belt. He was standing in the middle of the square, reading a large, crinkly newspaper. Since he was hard of hearing, he did not speak to anyone.

Four blacksmiths stood in a group nearby. They all worked at the same smithy, but since they lived in different parts of the city they liked to get together here in the evening.

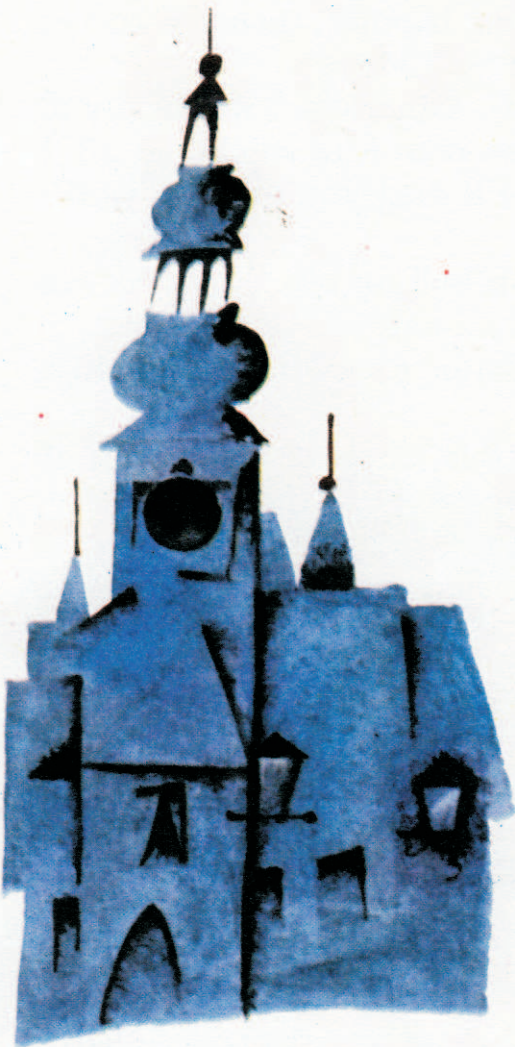
Off to a side some house-painters and paper-hangers were talking loudly and waving their hands.

There was a hum of voices everywhere, a regular waterfall of voices. It was especially noisy in the square that evening.

"When he came to my house I found myself giving him my best bolt of cloth," the Weaver shouted.

"He walked off with my entire supply of brass nails," the Shoemaker said.

"Who is he?" the people asked one another.





"He's a robber!" some shouted.

"That's impossible! He's no robber, he's just very big," others said.

"He has a beard," Scissors the Barber said.

"And a black eye-patch," Molasses added, feeling very proud of himself for knowing so much.

"He has a famous granddaddy," Scissors the Barber continued.

"And his name's Legging," Molasses added.

Everyone decided that Legging must be a good friend of theirs, since they knew so much about him.

Meanwhile, Scissors and Molasses were feeling very important.

Just then Flute the Clown came running into the square. He was alone, since Waffles and Choc'lit had taken another street. Flute made his way to the middle of the square. Although it was very crowded and noisy, everyone turned to look at him, for the bell on his cap kept jingling.

"Hey, quit shoving!" Molasses muttered. He was angry because someone else had attracted everyone's attention.

"Indeed," said Scissors the Barber. "We were having a nice talk before he came barging in as if he were more important than anyone else."

WHERE IS HE?

When Legging finally appeared on Cardboard Clock Square the place was in an uproar. He looked the place over and said in his loudest voice: "Where's the fellow in the clown's cap? Bring him here this minute."

Everything became very still. The only sound was the rustling of the Tailor's newspaper. He was so deaf he hadn't heard a thing.

Then Legging noticed the Baker standing nearby.

"Ah, an old friend! I hope you all tell me where that good-for-nothing fellow and the Candy Wrapper Girl are."

The Baker set his glasses straight, raised his brows and said, "Do you mean the lively boy in the red and blue cap? If he's really a good-for-nothing I must say I never noticed it." Then he mumbled something. He was concocting a frosting to be made with rose petals. The crowd began moving away from Legging.

Some were afraid of him.

Others wanted to be on the safe side.

All the rest wanted to get a better view of him.



Scissors the Barber remained where he was. After all, Legging was supposed to be his friend and he simply couldn't run away and hide. Molasses peeped out from behind Scissor's shoulder.

"I don't think you know who you're dealing with," Legging said. "I swear by my granddaddy...." He did not finish saying whatever he was going to say, because Scissors the Barber doffed his hat and inquired:

"And how is your famous granddaddy? "

"Don't you dare mention my granddaddy Swash Buckle! And stop pestering me with foolish questions."

Scissors became so frightened he forgot he had already removed his hat and hastily pulled off his wig as well. A pink cloud of powder rose from the wig. It floated by Molasses' nose. Molasses breathed in, but instead of sneezing he said:

"Ah ... Ah ... I know where he is. He's at the Shoemaker's house! "



HURRY TO THE SHOEMAKER'S!

Waffles and Choc'lit ran all the way to the Baker's house. Then only did Waffles turn around. "Where's Flute, Choc'lit? Do you think that awful Legging got him?" Choc'lit stood up on his hind legs and licked her hand.

"Oh, Choc'lit, you're a very smart dog, but there's so much you don't understand," Waffles said and sighed. "I hope he got away." Then she went inside and lit a candle. Lagre grey shadows ran up the walls, away from the curly flame, and then slipped out of the window.

When the Baker got home Waffles told him about Flute the Clown and about their chase.

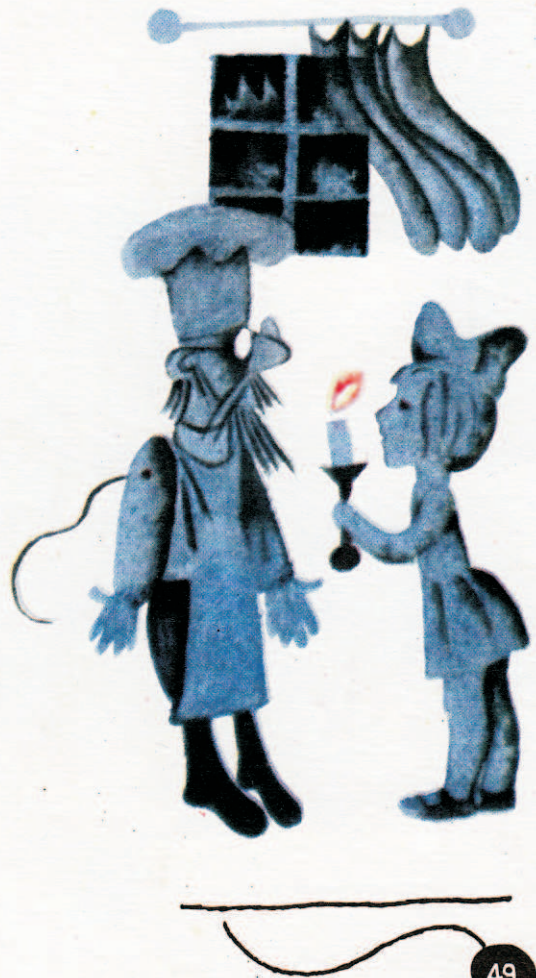
"I see. So the boy in the clown's cap saved Choc'lit, did he? My, my! What a shame!"

"Why? He saved Choc'lit, didn't he?"

"I went right over to the Shoemaker's house to warn him. But I can't run faster than Legging. He steps right over fences and even over billboards."

"I don't understand a thing," Waffles said and sniffled.

"I'm very worried. Ah, I forgot, you weren't at Cardboard Clock



Square. Your friend Flute the Clown is at the Shoemaker's house, and Legging went there after him. He'll surely catch Flute. My, My! What a shame!" The Baker shook his head sadly. He was so upset he forgot to write down the recipe for his new Rose Petal Frosting.

"Where's Molasses?" Waffles asked.

"Please don't remind me of him. I forgot all about him."



IT PAYS TO THINK THINGS OUT

It became dark. Blue moonbeams slid over the rooftops. The round lantern over the entrance to the Shoemaker's house was broken.

A splinter of glass crunched under Waffles' foot. She picked it up and put it in her pocket.

The Shoemaker was sitting on the stoop.

"Good evening," Waffles said.

He shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I can't repair any shoes or sew bows on party slippers today. My hands don't want to obey me, no matter what I say to them."

"You don't recognize me. I'm the Candy Wrapper Girl. Can you tell me where Flute the Clown is? I just know something terrible has happened! "

"I knew right off that that bearded fellow Legging was no good. He snatched the poor boy, stuck him in his pocket and fastened him there with a huge safety pin. I wanted to stop him, but my hands simply refused to obey me. Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. I have the strangest feeling that someone has pinned my hands behind my back." He sighed.

"What'll we do? "

"I ran after Legging and saw him





lock the boy up in the Soap Cellar. But I couldn't do a thing." The Shoemaker sighed miserably again.

"Which cellar?" Waffles asked.

"The Soap Cellar. That's where all the soap bubbles are kept. They're filled with warm air in summer, and in winter we use them to heat our homes. We prick a bubble with a pin and the warm air comes out and fills the room."

"We've got to hurry if we want to save Flute," Waffles said excitedly. "I have a sliver of glass. Maybe Flute can use it."

Waffles put her hand in her pocket and as she did the rolled-up maple leaf fell out.

The Shoemaker picked it up. He began smoothing it out on the palm of his hand absent-mindedly. A street light swayed in the wind nearby, casting a yellow beam on the leaf.

"What's this?" he said, holding the leaf up to his eyes. "There's something written on it. I'll go and get my glasses."



"I'll tell you what it is. A man in a green hat whose name is Brim the Hatter gave it to me. He said that if I ever needed him I should look for him in Big City."

"Wait a minute! Did you say Big City? "

"Yes. At the fair. But it's a long way to Big City and we have to save Flute right now."

"Let's not rush into things, child. Sometimes it pays to sit down and think things out first. Even when there's real trouble." The Shoemaker leaned his head on his hand, frowned and was silent for a very long time.

All of a sudden he smiled, raised his finger and said: "I've got it! "

THE SOAP CELLAR

Molasses looked around the corner. He had seen Legging lock up Flute the Clown in the Soap Cellar.

"It serves that Flute right. This'll teach him not to be so stuck-up," he said to himself. He was very pleased.

Meanwhile, Legging was standing near the locked door, thinking: "I'll rip the rag doll apart tomorrow and use the strips to patch my pocket. The whole city belongs to me now. I'll have lots of money. And I need a good deep pocket for my money. He-he-he. Even though my granddaddy was a famous robber, he never would have thought of this."

Legging went over to the tiny window and looked in. It was dark and still inside. "Hey, you! Don't get lonely in there. I'll be back tomorrow morning. He-he-he."

Flute the Clown said nothing.

"He might try to escape," Legging said to himself. "I know I should stay here and see that he doesn't, but it's dark and I'm scared."

He looked around. "What if somebody tries to attack me? I don't know any of the city robbers. My granddaddy used to say: 'You're better off meeting nobody than a robber you don't know.'"

He looked around again.

At that very moment Molasses stuck his head around the corner.

"Help! Who's there?" Legging croaked. "Don't try to scare me!"





"I'm not trying to scare you. I'm scared myself," Molasses said.

Legging recognized him and calmed down. "Don't be afraid of me, Fatso," he said in his most sugary voice.

"I'm not. Just a little bit." Molasses came closer.

Legging patted him on the back and said, "You sit here by the door and see that nobody leaves the cellar. I have to go to Let's see Where was it I had to go? Oh, yes! To pick some berries. That's it. I love to pick berries at night. And don't you try making fun of me! "

Legging walked off. He started singing a song:

*"Fiddle-diddle-diddle-dee,
Cobwebs gleaming in the sun.
Mister Spider wants to treat
His lady love to luncheon.*

*Fiddle-diddle-diddle-dee,
Cobwebs floating in a loop.
Mister Spider has agreed
To serve his lady fly soup."*



THE SHOEMAKER'S PLAN

"Here's Tinkling Bells Street," the Shoemaker said. "And there's the Soap Cellar."

"Wait. There's somebody outside the cellar," Waffles whispered.

The Shoemaker stopped.

Choc'lit growled.

"That's not Legging. He's much too small to be Legging," the Shoemaker said.

"I think it's Molasses."

"Hm. What's he doing here? "

They went over to him. Choc'lit growled again.

"What are you doing here?" the Shoemaker asked.

Molasses strutted up and down in front of the locked cellar door and said in a very important voice: "I'm on guard! My friend Legging decided to get even with Flute for being nasty and shoving me away back at the square." He puffed out his cheeks. This made him look very important and very foolish.

Waffles went over to the little window. "Are you there, Flute?" she whispered.

From somewhere deep in the dark cellar she heard him say:

"Here I am, over here! Cobwebs got stuck in my ear. Crowds of mice are on the ground, soap bubbles are all



around. They are slippery and big, and as dusty as a wig.”

“Don’t worry, Flute. The soap bubbles will help you escape. Find the biggest one and roll it over to the door. The minute Legging opens it, grab hold of the bubble. It’ll fly up and carry you out of the cellar.”

“That really is splendid! It’s high time this ended. I’ll be very happy to catch Legging napping! ”

Waffles took the maple leaf from her pocket and dropped it through the window, saying: “Give this to Brim the Hatter when you reach the fair in Big City. He’ll surely come back to help us.”

Molasses had heard nothing of all this and so did not know what was going on, because he was busy telling the Shoemaker about his brave and clever friend Legging.



HE'LL COME BACK!

"Look! Look! " a boy shouted excitedly. He had climbed a lamppost and was waving and pointing. Shutters banged. People in nightcaps stuck their heads out of the windows. Everyone looked up, squinting from the morning sun in their eyes.

A large soap bubble was floating over the houses, higher than the highest weather vanes. It was blue like the sky, orange like the sun and green like the grass. The bubble rose higher and higher, carrying off Flute the Clown, who was hanging on for dear life. Everyone in the city knew that Flute had fallen into the clutches of the brute Legging, and no wonder everyone knew, for news travels so fast it sometimes gets ahead of itself.

"He's saved! " some said.

"That remains to be seen. You can never rely on a soap bubble," others replied.

"Why is he riding the bubble?" all the rest wondered.

At first, Legging ran after Flute. Then he had to jump higher and higher as he tried to



catch the bubble, But he couldn't. Finally, he stopped jumping and looked up, throwing his head so far back his beard became higher than his nose. "Aha! He's heading right into a weather vane." Legging was very pleased.

But by then Flute the Clown had risen higher than all the weather vanes.

"Then he'll crash into a branch," Legging said.

Soon Flute was floating over the highest trees.

"Well then, a bird will brush against the bubble and it'll burst. He-he-he." Legging sounded very sure of himself.

But the soap bubble floated away, sparkling in the sun.

"I'll be back so-oo-on! " Flute the Clown shouted as he disappeared beyond the tree tops.

"Did you hear that? He'll be back! " some of the people said excitedly.

"Do you really think he'll be back? " others asked in surprise.

"He may come back," all the rest said uncertainly.



THE MERRY- GO-ROUND

*"The birds awoke at dawn today,
The fields are all aglow.
My bubble's wafting me away,
Heigh-diddle-de, diddle-de-do,"*

sang Flute the Clown.

A warm breeze lifted the bubble very high into the sky and then blew it down again.

Soon Flute spotted the stone wall around Big City. The sun made the stones look pink.

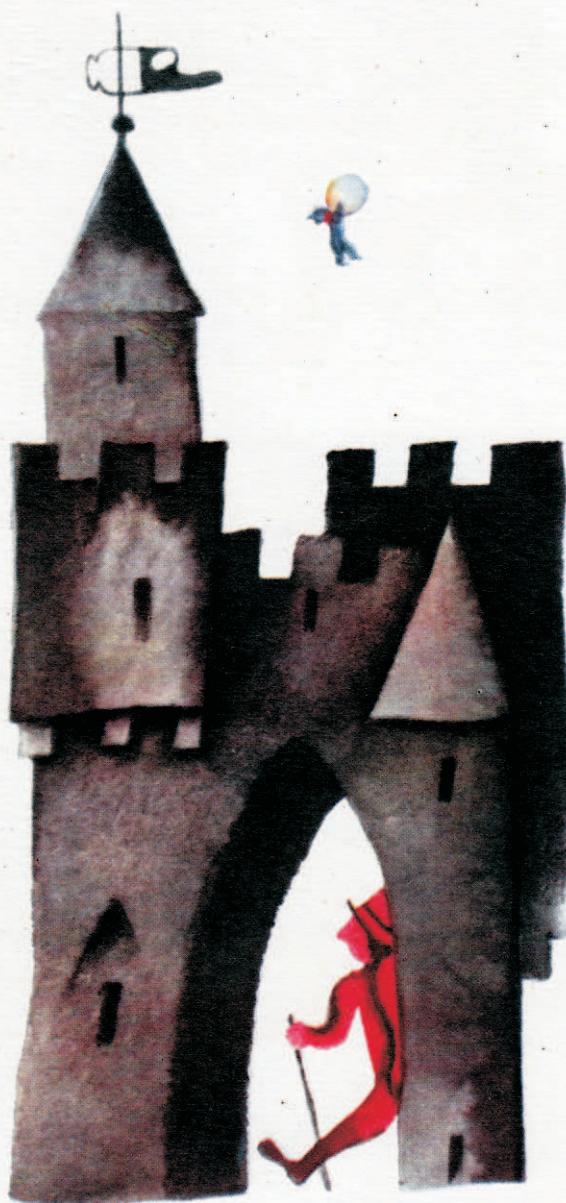
All of a sudden the bubble became wrinkled. It began going down, down, down.

Flute got a firmer hold on it and shouted: "Wind, please blow harder! Bubble, you fly high! Don't you drop me on the ground, keep me in the sky! "

The wind seemed to have heard him for the bubble soared up and floated over the city wall.

Flute could see the milling crowd of gaily dressed people below. He could hear shouting and snatches of song. The colored flags on the houses all fluttered in the wind.

FAIR! FAIR! FAIR!





This word was printed everywhere: on the flags, on signs and on billboards.

Flute was now sailing over the square and over the merry-go-round that looked like a bright umbrella.

Then, suddenly....

Ping! The soap bubble burst. The sound was like ringing glass.

Flute shut his eyes.

He knew he would come crashing down to the sidewalk. He was falling, falling. He even thought he had hit something, but it didn't hurt. Just as he was about to open his eyes he realized he was still falling. But now he was no longer falling down, he was moving ahead.

"Is the wind still blowing me along?" he wondered and opened his eyes.

Surprise! He had fallen right on the merry-go-round and had landed on the back of a wooden deer. So that was why he thought he was moving forward after he had stopped falling. The merry-go-round was turning!

The ticket man did not know where Flute the Clown had come from but he did know that the boy on the deer had not paid for his ride.

"Pay for a ticket! You didn't pay!" he shouted.

By then Flute had sailed past him.

All the ticket man heard was:

"I'm Flute!"



"What flook? "

Flute the Clown kept riding by, shouting a few words each time he passed the ticket man, who could not understand a thing.

"I have to see...."

"What after see? "

"Brim the Hatter...."

"Bring the matter? "

"The girl, the lass...."

"Who needs glasses? I can see well enough without glasses, and you haven't paid for the ride! " The ticket man finally stopped the merry-go-round.

"...sent me. The Candy Wrapper Girl," Flute explained and got off the deer.

"I don't accept candy wrappers. You owe me a silver coin for the ride," the man said, grabbing hold of Flute's sleeve.

"You've got everything wrong," Flute said. He took the maple leaf from his pocket. "Here, read this."

The ticket man took the leaf. There were only two words on it: "Kindness" and "Skill". Strangely, this made him smile.

"Why didn't you say so right away? That's Brim the Hatter's motto. Everyone knows him. Brim the Hatter's a real magician. Fat men become thin when they wear his hats. Short men become tall. And all the ladies become beautiful. There's a wrought-iron hat with a silver plume over the entrance to his shop. You can't help noticing it."

"Thank you," Flute said. "I'll hurry over."

"Come back and ride the merry-go-round! " the ticket man shouted as Flute ran off. "Going round in circles is the easiest thing you can do. So many people enjoy doing just that."

KING OR ROBBER?

When Legging realized that he would not be able to catch Flute, he became very cross.

"I swear by my granddaddy that I'll find him anyway," Legging said in his meanest voice.

Everyone heard him say this.

All the heads wearing nightcaps quickly disappeared. Shutters banged shut. The boys on the lampposts gaped. At first, no one uttered a sound. Then everyone began whispering. Then they started speaking in loud voices.

"He's a robber," some said.

"Yes, he probably is," others agreed.

"He really is!" all the rest gasped fearfully.

"Who dared to say that I was a robber?" Legging bellowed. "I'm the KING OF CARDBOARD CITY! And don't you ever forget it."

"Kings can also be robbers," some said.

"And sometimes robbers become kings," others said.

"And it's best to keep away from both robbers and kings," all the rest said and began drifting away.

"Aha! So you want to run away!" Legging screamed. "Well, I won't let you. One fellow sailed off on a soap bubble, but you're not going anyplace.



I have you all where I want you! ”

At this he began gathering up the strings that hung down their backs. He ran up and down the streets, sticking his hand through the windows, pulling some of the cardboard people off their balconies and others out of their attics.

Soon he reached Cardboard Clock Square.



A PAIR OF BOOTS FOR LEGGING

Brim the Hatter and Flute the Clown were walking down the deserted streets of Cardboard City.

"That's strange," Brim said. "It's so quiet here you'd think the whole city was sleeping."

"Maybe everyone's disappeared? This place is so silent and queer," Flute said.

Suddenly Brim stopped. "Do you hear that?" he said.

Flute shut his right eye and stuck out his left ear.

Tap, tap-tap. Tap, tap-tap.

"It's a woodpecker."

"No, it isn't. When woodpeckers drill for food the sound they make is: *tuk-tuk, tuk-tuk.*"

"Then it's a clock!"

"No. Clocks are always certain of the time and they go: *tick-tock, tick-tock!*"

"Then it's a hammer!"

"Right. Someone's hammering. First he goes *tap?* to make sure he's hitting the right spot, and then he goes *tap-tap.*"

"If Someone is tapping, then Someone's not napping!"

The hammering was coming from the Shoemaker's house.







Flute ran up the steps and opened the door.

The Shoemaker was sitting at his work bench, hammering wooden pegs into the huge sole of a huge boot. *Tap? Tap-tap! Tap? Tap-tap!* went his hammer.

"Good day," Flute said.

"Oh, my! Is it already day? I have to hurry, or I won't have time to put on the heels."

"Don't you recognize me? I'm Flute the Clown! "

"I know who you are, but I've no time to talk. I have to have these boots ready by the time the clock on the square strikes two."

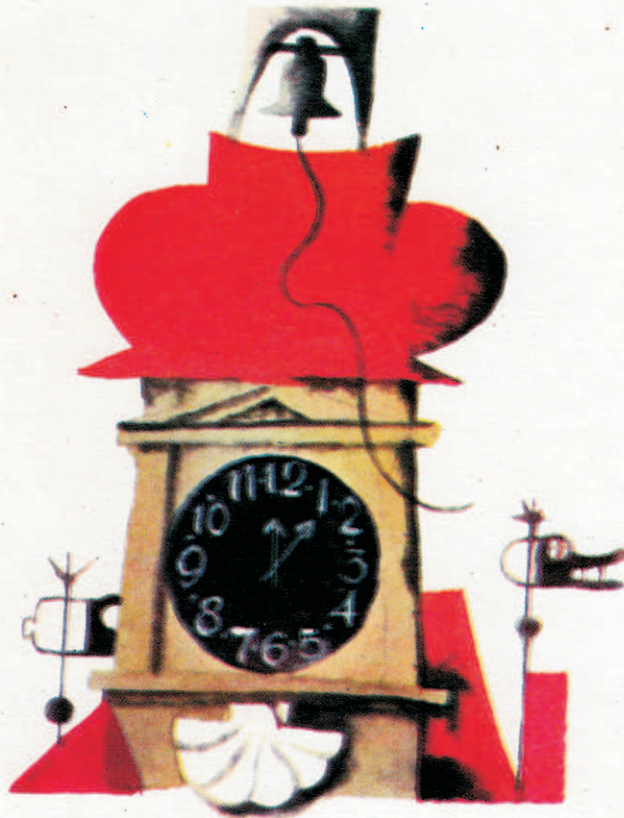
"I never saw boots this size. I can't believe my eyes," Flute said.

"Don't bother me. The



clock has already struck one. I still have to put on the heels. Can't you see, these boots are for Legging." And the Shoemaker's hammer went: *Tap? Tap-tap!*

"Let's hurry to Cardboard Clock Square," Brim said. "I have a feeling something's going on."



SNIP! SWISH! BOOM!

Work was in full swing at Cardboard Clock Square.

Snip-snip, went Scissors the Barber's shears as he cut Legging's beard.

Swish! Swish! went the heavy iron as the Tailor ironed the patches on Legging's pockets. One patch was a red square, another was a long blue strip and the third was round and yellow.

Boom! Boom! went the sledge-hammers of the four blacksmiths. They were forging cleats for Legging's boots.

Legging was sitting on a round billboard in the middle of the square. There were two empty crates on the ground nearby. There had been chocolate in them. Molasses was grunting as he broke open a third crate.

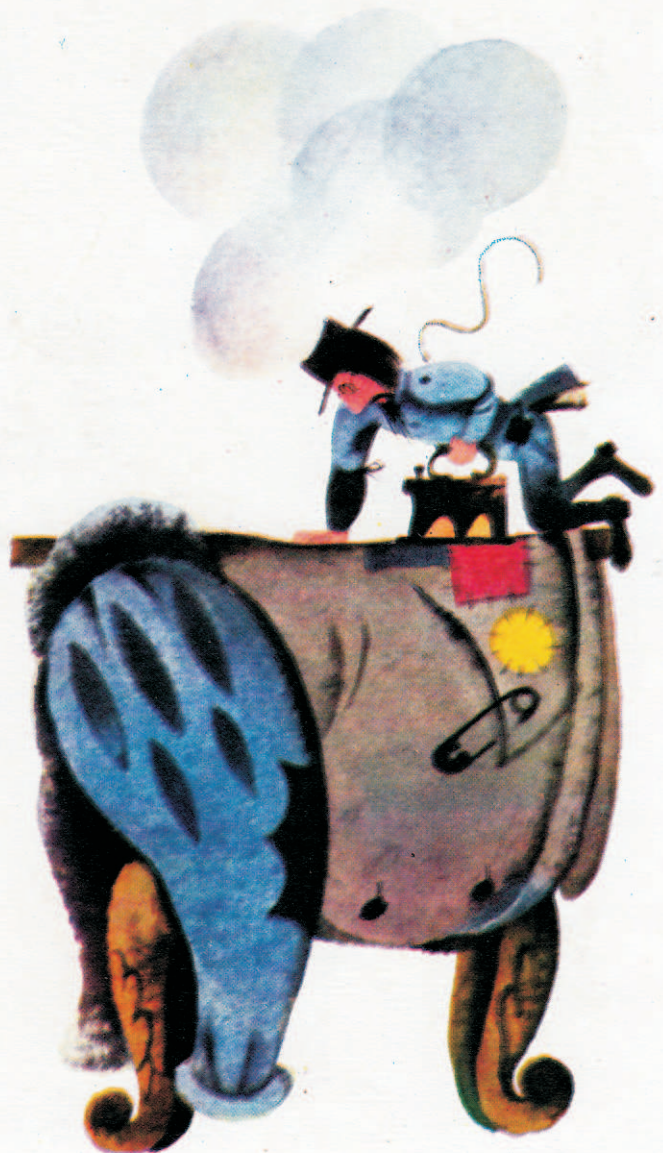
"Hurry! What's taking you so long?" Legging shouted and pulled at the strings.

Snip! Swish! Boom!

"Faster! Faster!" He pulled at the strings again.

Snip! Swish! Boom!

"He-he! Come on, still faster!"





But it was impossible to work any faster. Blue sheaves of sparks rose over the sledge-hammers. A white cloud of steam hung over the ironing board.

In the midst of all the commotion Waffles appeared on the square. "What's going on here?" she said.

No one replied.

Legging sat up straight. He was so astounded he let the strings slip out of his hands.

Boom! went the sledge-hammers.

Swish! went the iron.

Everyone stopped. They raised their heads.

"Whew!" some said.

"Ooh!" said the others



"What are we doing?" all the rest wondered.

"Why did you scare me like that?" Legging bleated. "My hands are shaking so I can't even pick up the strings."

"You can sew on your patches yourself," Waffles said.

"Don't you dare talk to me like that!" Legging roared. He was about to grab Waffles, but Choc'lit growled and bared his teeth. Legging jerked his hand away. He shook his finger at Choc'lit and said, "Hey! Stop that! All right, Candy Wrapper Girl, since your dog asked me so nicely, I'll forgive you. Don't be scared."

"I'm not. And neither is anyone else."

"Of course we're not," some said.

"People are afraid when there's something to fear, but when there isn't, there isn't anything to fear," others said.

"If there's nothing to fear, there's nothing to fear," all the rest said and shut their eyes tight.

Legging jumped up and stamped his foot. "See what you've done! " he screamed at Waffles in his whining voice again. "Now they're not afraid of me any more." He smoothed his beard. "Don't worry, though. I'll scare you good now. All of you! "

At this he put on his black eye-patch and pulled out his pistol.

The pistol didn't work, but it was big and rusty.



TWO WONDERFUL WORDS

"I think we're just in time," Brim the Hatter said.

He was standing on Cardboard Clock Square with Flute the Clown perched comfortably on his shoulder.

"Look! Flute the Clown and Brim the Hatter!" Waffles cried and clapped her hands.

Choc'lit began barking excitedly and wagging his tail.

"See?" Waffles said, "Choc'lit recognized you. He's a very smart dog and understands practically everything."

Brim looked at Legging. "I recognize you, too. You're the highway robber who likes to sleep in the daytime."

"I'm not just any run-of-the-mill robber," Legging huffed in his stuffiest voice. "My granddaddy Swash Buckle was a famous robber. I'd like you to remember that."

"That's nothing to be proud of. All a robber can be famous for is robbing people."

"But my granddaddy Swash Buckle was very fierce!" Legging replied in his fiercest voice.

"So what?"

"I'm the spitting image of him."





"Then I'll have to change my tactics," Brim said and frowned.

"What do you mean? "

"He'll give you a beating, that's what," Flute said.

Brim the Hatter nodded.

Legging looked at the size of Brim's fists and quickly stuck his rusty pistol back into his pocket. "Now wait a minute. You interrupted me. I was going to add that my granddaddy was also a very obedient robber. And I'm the spitting image of him. If you ask me very nicely I can leave." At this Legging tiptoed off without once turning to look back at the square.

"You scared him off. Hooray! " Waffles cried.

"Hooray! " some of the people shouted.

"Hooray! " others shouted.

"Hooray! " all the rest shouted, but not very loud. Just in case.

Molasses was the only one who kept still. He was hiding behind the

Cardboard Clock Tower. Everyone had forgotten about him anyway. When people are happy they don't like to remember unpleasant things.

Flute the Clown slid off Brim's shoulder and rushed over to embrace Waffles and Choc'lit.

Brim the Hatter had all the cardboard people gather round. He tied the ends of the strings of each one's hands and head together.

"There. That takes care of that. Now your heads and your hands will work together. If your head says you're to work, your hands will obey. If your hands are working, your head will be working, too. Now nobody will ever be able to make you do something you don't want to do. And I know you will all be happy. It's important that you remember two wonderful words: kindness and skill."

"Kindness," some repeated.

"Skill," said the others.

"Kindness and skill," said all the rest.



A ROBBER NO MORE

Legging the Robber was sitting under the old oak tree by the highway munching thoughtfully on some blueberries.

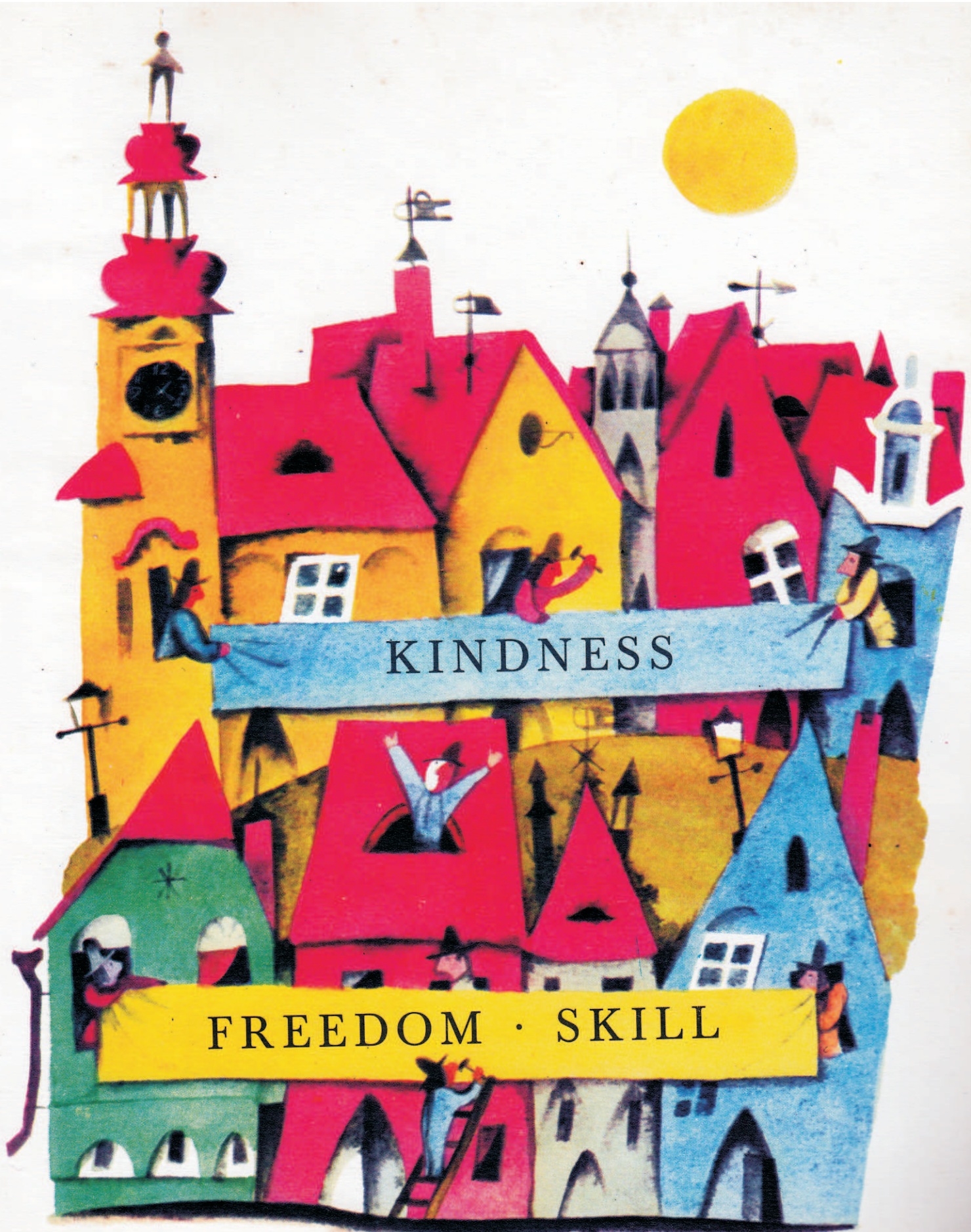
"What'll I do? My granddaddy, the famous robber Swash Buckle, always said, 'If things get tough, think of a way out.' But I can't seem to be able to think of anything."

Legging sighed and pulled the eye-patch off his right eye. "I know. I can pick blueberries and take them to the Baker. And he can bake me blueberry pies. That's my favorite kind. And Molasses will be my helper. After all, we're sort of friends now."

Well, well. There didn't seem to be any other way out.

After all,
**EVERYBODY LIKES A GOOD
WORKER, BUT NOBODY
LIKES A GOOD-FOR-NOTH-
ING HIGHWAY ROBBER.**





KINDNESS

FREEDOM · SKILL



